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A STUDY OF SMALL BUSINESS PUBLIC RELATIONS BEHAVIOR TO
ASCERTAIN A NEED FOR A DO-IT-YOURSELF
PUBLIC RELATIONS WEB SITE

by
William Pavlou, Jr.

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
June 22, 2005

Approved by _____
Dr. Donald Bagin

Date Approved 6-22-05

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ABSTRACT

**WILLIAM PAVLOU, JR.
A STUDY OF SMALL BUSINESS PUBLIC RELATIONS BEHAVIOR TO
ASCERTAIN A NEED FOR A DO-IT-YOURSELF
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2004/2005**

**Thesis Advisor: Dr. Donald Bagin
Corporate Public Relations Graduate Program**

The purposes of this study were to (a) study the behavior of New Jersey small business owners and (b) use this information as primary research to ascertain a need for a do-it-yourself public relations Web site. A survey questionnaire was mailed to 75 New Jersey small business owners who were randomly selected from the New Jersey Directory of Small Businesses 2005 Directory. More than half of the New Jersey small business owners who were surveyed responded to this study.

The data collected in this study strongly supports the author's first hypothesis that small business owners believe public relations can contribute to the growth of a small business. The data also proved that the author's next hypothesis, that business owners are more likely to institute a public relations program if they can do it themselves, to be true. And finally the author hypothesized that the need exists among small businesses for a Web site pertaining to do-it-yourself public relations practices. The data proved this to be true as well.

MINI-ABSTRACT

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The data collected proved the author's hypotheses to be true – showing that small business owners understand the impact public relations can have on their business while providing evidence that designing a do-it-yourself public relations Web site was ultimately necessary.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is dedicated to my parents, Bill and Barbara Pavlou, who helped me become the person I am today. Throughout my life they have stood behind me and allowed me to make my own decisions. They taught me that by working hard and maintaining a good attitude I could be successful in whatever I did – my first real PR lesson. I wouldn't have been able to come this far if it wasn't for them.

I'd also like to dedicate this work to Stephanie Zultanky. Her eye for editing made me a better writer and her smile made me fall in love with her. We spent countless nights working on papers and projects, about as many as we spent sharing our dreams and planning our future. I couldn't imagine doing this without you.

A special thanks goes to my brothers, Andrew and Michael. I needed those laughs every time I went home.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The number of small businesses in the United States continues to grow. In 2002 the number of small businesses in the United States was approximately 22.9 million, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).¹ The SBA was formed from the Small Business Act of 1953.² The SBA defines small business as one that is independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation.³

Small businesses represent 99.7 percent of all employers and provide nearly three-quarters of the new net jobs added to the economy. SBA statistics also show that in 2002 there were over 550,000 new small businesses – an increase from 2001.⁴

The events of September 11, 2001 severely hurt businesses across the country. New Jersey was one of the hardest hit states. Despite the immediate economic struggles, New Jersey small businesses created many job opportunities – especially for minorities and women⁵ – following the September 11 terrorist attacks.

¹ Small Business Administration statistics www.sba.gov

² Small Business Act of 1953

³ Small Business Administration www.sba.gov

⁴ Small Business Administration statistics www.sba.gov

⁵ Small Business Administration *2002 Small Business Profile: NEW JERSEY*

With the majority of New Jersey's workforce involved with small businesses, many resources are available to small business owners and employees. The SBA serves as an office of advocacy.⁶ The New Jersey Commission's Office of Business Services promotes growth and prosperity while working with the New Jersey Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) to ensure the best, most efficient service, education and training for small business entrepreneurs.⁷

Training programs and advocacy organizations serve as essential tools for a small business owner. However, many small business owners lack an understanding, and more importantly training, in public relations.

In 1987 Joanne Brigandi studied small businesses in southern New Jersey to determine a need for public relations consulting.⁸ Branching from Brigandi's work, Susan Godfrey conducted a study in 1993 concerning small business public relations behavior. Godfrey states immediate issues that entrepreneurs have:

“As these entrepreneurs set out in record numbers to build something of their own, they are fueled by the desire to create and maintain a positive image and to successfully promote their own businesses. However, they find themselves faced with fierce competition.”⁹

Competition is what drives business. Effective public relations can help small businesses succeed in an increasingly competitive business environment.

⁶ Small Business Administration www.sba.gov

⁷ New Jersey Commerce: Small Businesses www.state.nj.us/commerce/smallbiz.shtml

⁸ Joanne M. Brigandi, “A Study of Small Businesses in South Jersey to Determine the Need for Public Relations Consulting,” A Master's Thesis, Glassboro State College, 1987:2.

⁹ Susan L. Godfrey, “A Study of Small business Public Relations Behavior to Determine a Market For Do-It-Yourself Public Relations Training Material Among Small Businesses,” A Master's Thesis, Rowan College, 1993:1-2.

In her study, Godfrey surveyed 150 small businesses in New Jersey. Of the 81 responses she received, a majority of small business owners indicated they were not happy with their company's growth over the past 12 months. This group targeted the absence of marketing and public relations as a factor in the hindered growth. Conversely, those who were happy with their company's growth cited marketing and public relations efforts as a major factor in their success.¹⁰

The Problem

Small business owners recognize that public relations is valuable to the success of their business. However, since most business owners are not trained in public relations, they tend to stay away from it.

In her research from 1987 Brigandi concluded that small businesspersons consider public relations to be a two-way flow of communication between the company and its various audiences.¹¹ She also found that these businesspersons view public relations as important not only to the overall success of their businesses, but also in attracting new clients.¹² That being said, nothing still seemed to be done about it.

Godfrey built upon Brigandi's study, and in 1993 came to similar conclusions. Like Brigandi, Godfrey found that many small business owners were not satisfied with growth and recognized that a lack of public relations played a pivotal role in this.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 56-58.

¹¹ Joanne M. Brigandi, "A Study of Small Businesses in South Jersey to Determine the Need for Public Relations Consulting," A Master's Thesis, Glassboro State College, 1987:27.

¹² Ibid., 27-28.

¹³ Susan L. Godfrey, "A Study of Small business Public Relations Behavior to Determine a Market For Do-It-Yourself Public Relations Training Material Among Small Businesses," A Master's Thesis, Rowan College, 1993:57.

Godfrey took her study another step further and discovered that although small businesses do not utilize public relations, they would if they had more knowledge of the subject and access to do-it-yourself training:

Small business owners interested in handling their own public relations programs want public relations training material that is affordable, involves minimum investment of their time, and is relevant to the needs of a small business.¹⁴

In their book, The Essential Guide to Managing Small Business Growth, Peter Wilson and Sue Bates mention the diversity of small businesses:

“In considering the management needs of growing businesses, we must take into account the great diversity of business organizations and their individual situations and characteristics.”¹⁵

The diversity of small businesses leads to different public relations challenges for different organizations.

Godfrey determined the importance small business owners placed on public relations. She pointed to her survey data as an indicator that there was a market for do-it-yourself public relations.¹⁶ Based on her recommendations and training, Godfrey drafted a script for a public relations training videotape.¹⁷

Since the early 1990s, not much has changed concerning the small businesses' need for public relations. Small business owners recognize a need for a public relations

¹⁴ Ibid., 100.

¹⁵ Sue Bates and Peter Wilson, *The Essential Guide to Managing Small Business Growth* (Hoboken, NJ, 2003): 4.

¹⁶ Susan L. Godfrey, “A Study of Small business Public Relations Behavior to Determine a Market For Do-It-Yourself Public Relations Training Material Among Small Businesses,” A Master’s Thesis, Rowan College, 1993:56.

¹⁷ Ibid.

plan, but are unsure how to develop one. Therefore, the need for do-it-yourself public relations training still exists.

Purpose of the Project

Like Godfrey's study, the purpose of this research is twofold. First it looks to determine the attitudes of New Jersey small business owners toward public relations. This portion of the research will also pinpoint small business owners various public relations needs and assess existing communication programs if they exist.

The final purpose of this project is to use the information as the basis for recommendations for a Web site that will serve as a central resource for small business owners. Godfrey created a training-videotape script "to enable small companies to execute their own public relations programs by providing them with practical, affordable information on the topic."¹⁸ In keeping with trends and technological advances, the Web site recommendations serve as an update to the training videotape. Internet communication, namely e-mail and Web sites, have become increasingly crucial to small businesses and an accessible, easy-to-use Web site could have some real value to small business owners.

¹⁸ Susan L. Godfrey, "A Study of Small business Public Relations Behavior to Determine a Market For Do-It-Yourself Public Relations Training Material Among Small Businesses," Rowan College, 1993.

Procedure

1. A review of related literature will be conducted. Various books that discuss small business communication as well as government documents, journals and magazines will be reviewed. Like Godfrey's study, the purpose of this project is to determine the attitudes of small business owners and utilize a channel to serve as a source of public relations training information. Audiovisual materials will also be consulted and is the case with Brigandi and Godfrey's research previous studies and theses will be cited.
2. Essentially this study serves as an amended update to Godfrey's study. Therefore, some of her research methods will be replicated. A survey will be constructed and sent out to 75 New Jersey small business owners.
3. Ultimately the survey results will be analyzed and serve as the foundation for the Web site recommendations. The realization of this Web site will serve as a "how-to" for small business owners who are interested in learning public relations techniques and tactics that will benefit their small business.

Terminology

Entrepreneur - The individual who assumes the financial risk of the initiation, operation and management of a given business or undertaking.

Small business (as defined by the Small Business Association) – A business that is independently owned and operated and is not dominant in its field.

Small business (as defined for the purpose of this project) – An independently owned and operated New Jersey business employing 50 or fewer individuals.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

There is a plethora of literature available that deals with public relations, small businesses and how the two directly relate to each other. This chapter serves as a review of the literature consulted for this project. The consulted literature consists of similar projects such as theses and dissertations. Secondary research also comes from books, journals, magazines, newspaper articles, trade publications, government publications, Web sites and other online resources - including databases.

Public relations is one of the most misunderstood, yet most effective tools for marketing a small business today. Therefore, a need exists for small business owners to grasp public relations and use it to contribute to their businesses' growth and success.

In establishing the role of public relations to a small business, one could think of it as comparable to the way the Small Business Administration (SBA) views their mission to small businesses: "maintain and strengthen...by aiding, counseling, assisting and protecting the interests of small businesses."¹⁹

Research began by searching through past Rowan University and Glassboro State College theses that were categorized in a library database. Joanne Brigandi's 1987 thesis, "A Study of Small Businesses in South Jersey to Determine the Need for Public Relations Consulting" explores the public relations needs of small businesses in southern New Jersey to determine a marketable audience for the public relations consultant.

¹⁹ Small Business Administration www.sba.gov

In her abstract Brigandi goes on to state, “small businesspersons agree that public relations is important to enhancing and improving their companies.”²⁰ Although small business owners understand the need for public relations, Brigandi goes on to mention that these small business owners do not seek the help of public relations practitioners “therefore, a large target market does exist in South Jersey for public relations consulting.”²¹

Brigandi delineated the following hypotheses:

- 1) Public relations is essential to the success of a small business;
- 2) Traditionally, few small businesses have developed public relations programs; and
- 3) Small business owners are increasingly becoming aware of the need for public relations to improve their company’s images and bottom line profits.²²

After conducting her study, Brigandi used her research to draw some conclusions. Her study showed that most small business owners knew what public relations was and understood its importance to their businesses’ success and in attracting new clients. Only one-third of the respondents to her survey employ the services of an outside public relations firm. Another third stated they handle their own public relations.

Brigandi’s survey findings also indicated that many business owners who use public relations in some capacity are not satisfied with the way it is being used. Brigandi

²⁰ Joanne M. Brigandi, “A Study of Small Businesses in South Jersey to Determine the Need for Public Relations Consulting,” A Master’s Thesis, Glassboro State College, 1987.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

recommends public relations education to small business owners, or to whoever is handling business public relations activity.

Continuing to search through the library database of theses, Susan Godfrey's 1993 study stood out as a resource that built upon the concepts of Brigandi's work. Godfrey's thesis, "A Study of Small business Public Relations Behavior to Determine a Market For Do-It-Yourself Public Relations Training Material Among Small Businesses," was a twofold project:

"Initially, it sought to determine the importance small business owners placed on a public relations program, explore their public relations needs, and ascertain whether there is a market for do-it-yourself public relations training material among small businesses."²³

The second scope of Godfrey's study was to draft a script for a do-it-yourself public relations videotape geared toward small business owners. This second portion of her study was contingent on her surveys and interviews supporting a need for do-it-yourself public relations materials.

Godfrey asserts that small business owners "are aware of the virtues of public relations."²⁴ She goes on to state that these small business owners "know that its [a public relations program] implementation can directly contribute to the overall success of their business."²⁵

In her study, Godfrey tested the following hypotheses:

²³ Susan L. Godfrey, "A Study of Small business Public Relations Behavior to Determine a Market For Do-It-Yourself Public Relations Training Material Among Small Businesses," A Master's Thesis, Rowan College, 1993.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

- 1) Small business owners believe that public relations can contribute to the growth of a small business;
- 2) Small business owners are more likely to institute a public relations program if they can do it themselves; and
- 3) There is a market among small businesses for affordable and applicable public relations training material.²⁶

Godfrey mailed surveys to 150 New Jersey small businesses. The businesses were selected from the New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce business directory. According to her findings, 63 percent of small business owners do not have a public relations program or do not engage in public relations at all.

After conducting her study, Godfrey set forth a few recommendations for small business owners based on her research findings. Some of these recommendations include undertaking public relations training tapes and undertaking “the development of training material other than video to assist small business owners in their do-it-yourself attempts at public relations.”²⁷

H. Gordon Lewis, author of the book “How to Handle Your Own Public Relations,” discusses the “do-it-yourself” approach to public relations:

“Much of what even a knowledgeable thoughtful professional public relations organization does also can be handled with equivalent professionalism by a businessman whose ego isn’t on the line and who

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

isn't afraid of the term-throwers and obfuscators who seem to abound in these waters."²⁸

Lewis then goes on to state:

"There never has been any question about the ability of a business owner or an organization chairman, for example to compete in public relations. The question has always been one of execution."²⁹

The question of execution lends itself to a direct need for "education" in do-it-yourself public relations training, as suggested by Brigandi and Godfrey.

One key aspect of public relations that many small business owners engage in, but do not usually realize, is part of public relations is relationship marketing. According to Peter Wilson and Sue Bates in their book "The Essential Guide to Managing Small Business Growth," relationship marketing "requires constant attention to target markets and close personal working relationships with customers."³⁰

The J.K. Lasser Tax Institute publishes, "How to Run a Small Business" and in this book stresses the importance of relationships for developing and keeping customers. The keys to good relationship building are being "personal, patient, persevering and proud of your product."³¹

For many small business owners, different aspects of communication become confused. The functions of marketing and public relations are often lumped together. In the textbook, "Business Communication Today," the confusion is discussed and the distinction made:

²⁸ Lewis, H. Gordon. How to Handle Your Own Public Relations. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1976.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Wilson, Peter and Sue Bates. The Essential Guide to Managing Small Business Growth. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2003.

³¹ J.K. Lasser Tax Institute. How to Run a Small Business. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989.

“Public relations is closely related to marketing and is often confused with it, but the focus of public relations differs. Marketing has three basic responsibilities: to find out who customers are and what they want, to develop products that satisfy those needs, and to get the products in the customer’s hands. The public relations department (also called the corporate communications department) manages the organization’s reputation with various groups, including employees, customers, investors, government agencies, and the general public.”³²

This textbook goes on to identify the necessary traits that business owners need to adopt as part of a successful public relations program: perception, precision, credibility, control and congeniality. The authors go on to state, “effective communicators work hard at perfecting the messages they deliver. When they make mistakes, they learn from them.”³³

Fred Hahn’s “Do it Yourself Advertising and Promotion” book is an example of a communication guide or aid that serves as a helpful and inexpensive do-it-yourself guide for “the business, corporation, or organization that must do its own advertising and promotion.”³⁴

In the first chapter written by Bob Killian, CEO of a Chicago-based integrated marketing company, branding is discussed:

“No business is too small—local retail store, shoe shiner—or too large—General Mills, General Motors—to focus on the importance of branding.

³² Bovee, Courtland L. and John V. Thill. Business Communication Today. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000: 12-13.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Hahn, Fred E. Do-it-Yourself Advertising and Promotion. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2003.

Every one must create expectations that promise value: What do customers think when they think of you? What do noncustomers expect? In other words, what is *your* brand?”³⁵

A chapter of the book is devoted to Internet advertising. In this chapter cautionary guides are established for small businesses. The author stresses the importance of thinking small. The author also notes that small business owners themselves can handle their own Internet responsibilities: “Just about anyone – including you – can learn to design a basic Web site.”³⁶

Another “how to” book, “How to Advertise and Promote Your Small Business” takes a more specific look at do-it-yourself public relations for small businesses. The second chapter deals with beginning to promote businesses and poses some different situations or dilemmas that small business owners might find their business in. These scenarios are realistic scenarios that target small business owners in a way that may garner their attention, therefore establishing a viable need for do-it-yourself public relations materials. These are the scenarios:

- You’ve put all your eggs into one small business, and every other night you dream of vast success. On alternate nights, you dream of meeting next month’s bills and being able to afford part-time help to sweep up the floor.
- You’ve established a small business, which has been moderately successful over the past few years, but in the back of your head lies a nagging thought that you must be doing something wrong, or your business would be doing much better.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 210.

- You've recently set up a new business. It took off like a bird those first few weeks, but now it's leveled off and profits are much lower than your original expectations. Are you doing something wrong, or were your early expectations unrealistic?³⁷

Using these scenarios that appeal to small business owners, the author goes on to recognize research and time as key factors in determining an audiences' needs.³⁸

For small business owners getting a message out can be simple or complex, but "the trick for the small business person is to keep publicity simple, direct and effective."³⁹

Bonnie Joe Davis, a marketer and writer, discusses the importance of implementing a public relations program as it relates to being a small business owner in a competitive marketplace:

"What is a small business owner to do? You have dozens, hundreds or even thousands of competitors around the world. How do you make yourself known amid all the noise and confusion? One thing is for certain. You may or may not have a budget for marketing and promotion but you want to get the most bang for your buck. Stretch your budget by developing a low cost public relations campaign that you can handle in house. Publicity is a much more powerful tool than advertising and a successful campaign lends credibility to you and your company."⁴⁰

³⁷ Siegel, Gonnice McClung. How to Advertise and Promote Your Small Business. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1978.

³⁸ Ibid., 5.

³⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁰ <http://www.zeromillion.com/marketing/public-relations.html>

In their book, *“Effective Public Relations,”* Scott Cutlip, Allen Center and Glen Broom discuss the relationship between public relations and the Internet in a section titled, *“New Media, New Challenges.”* They state:

“The Internet represents the most ubiquitous leading edge of what is a major communication revolution. The digital world has changed communication within organizations and between organizations and their various publics.”⁴¹

In the same chapter of *“Effective Public Relations,”* new media expert John Pavlik summarizes the impact of technology on public relations: “New technologies can enable communication professionals to do things in new and creative ways or even do entirely new things.”⁴²

Online technology has evolved to the point where virtually anyone, including Web-savvy, small business owners can utilize the Internet for their business.

While public relations material is widely available on the Internet, it is often found in bits and pieces and does not always come from a credible source. A need exists for do-it-yourself public relations training and an online Web site that serves as a credible collection of all the necessary information. One good example of this type of Web site does exist. The Web site www.prmadeeasy.com delineates a good portion of necessary information for small business owners looking to engage in do-it-yourself public relations. The main page of this Web site is divided into five parts:

- Professional PR guides;
- PR training courses;
- Reputations/News;

⁴¹ Cutlip, Scott M., Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom. *Effective Public Relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000: 285.

⁴² *Ibid.*

- About PR Made Easy; and
- Partner services.⁴³

One of the key features of this Web site is its newsletter. “Written by reputation managers from around North America, this easy-to-read newsletter is designed for anyone interested in building, protecting and improving their reputation.”⁴⁴ This Web site serves as an excellent example of a do-it-yourself public relations Web site, but a need still exists for more sites that are similar and expand upon some of the key concepts.

⁴³ www.prmadeeasy.com

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Chapter Three

Procedure

Electronic library databases provided information on small business public relations. These searches encompassed books, newspapers, journals, magazines, government documents, theses and dissertations. As an additional secondary resource the author consulted Web sites for governmental agencies and advocacy groups. The research resulted primarily in newspaper and journal articles. However, there was an influx of books written about small businesses and communications in the last five years. This trend seems to correlate with the growing number of New Jersey residents starting their own businesses.

Even with the recent surge of information written about small business communication, the definition and implementation of public relations remained ambiguous. An examination of the research ascertained the need to develop a Web site for do-it-yourself public relations.

Previous theses written by Joanne M. Brigandi⁴³ and Susan L. Godfrey⁴⁴ provided the foundation for the continuing study of small business public relations. In 1987, Brigandi surveyed small business owners in southern New Jersey to determine a need for public relations consulting. In 1993, Godfrey studied small business owners attitudes

⁴³ Joanne M. Brigandi, "A Study of Small Businesses in South Jersey to Determine the Need for Public Relations Consulting," A Master's Thesis, Glassboro State College, 1987.

⁴⁴ Susan L. Godfrey, "A Study of Small business Public Relations Behavior to Determine a Market For Do-It-Yourself Public Relations Training Material Among Small Businesses," A Master's Thesis, Rowan College, 1993.

toward public relations and used her findings to develop a video training script for do-it-yourself public relations.

The primary research for this project consisted of a mailed survey. This survey served as a tool to determine small business owners' attitudes toward public relations. The survey also gauged the importance small business owners place on a public relations program. The survey was designed to determine:

- How small business owners define public relations;
- Whether small businesses engage in public relations;
- What types of public relations activities small businesses engage in;
- How important public relations was to the company's success;
- Who handles the company's public relations activities;
- The company's satisfaction with its public relations program;
- What methods companies use for informing potential customers about their products and services;
- Whether or not companies have a Web site;
- What need exists for public relations training; and
- What the most desirable format for receiving public relations training material would be.

The survey questionnaire was created to test the following hypotheses:

- Small business owners believe that public relations can contribute to the growth of a small business⁴⁵;

⁴⁵ Ibid.

- Small business owners are more likely to institute a public relations program if they can do it themselves⁴⁶; and
- The need exists among small businesses for a Web site pertaining to do-it-yourself public relations practices.

The first two hypotheses are identical to those that Godfrey tested. The third hypothesis was similar because it dealt with the need for do-it-yourself public relations, but the medium was different.

The survey questions were designed to test the hypotheses. The survey was created on an 8.5" x 11" piece of paper, folded in half. The survey, along with a self-addressed 6" x 9" catalog envelope was placed inside a 6.5" x 9.5" envelope and addressed to each of the 75 New Jersey small businesses. The first page of the survey consisted of an explanatory cover letter. The surveys consisted of 21 questions. A sample survey is included in the Appendix.

The author then mailed surveys to the 75 New Jersey small business owners chosen for this study who employ 50 or fewer people. Their names were randomly selected from the New Jersey Directory of Small Businesses 2005 Directory. This business directory listed 24,500 members. The total population of 24,500 members was then divided by the sample population of 75, resulting in the number 327 when rounded. Therefore, every 327th business on the directory was selected. To determine a starting point from the business directory list, the numbers one through 327 were written on pieces of paper and placed in a container. The number 84 was drawn, indicating that the 84th business was the starting point. Beginning at the 84th listing, every 327th business was selected until the sample population of 75 was reached.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

The surveys were mailed and the respondents were given a two-week deadline to respond. Thirty-six surveys were returned, yielding a 48 percent response rate.

After the surveys were returned, the information was analyzed, tallied and organized. The second part of this project, the recommendations for a Web site, was developed using the results of the survey. This primary research as well as the secondary sources consulted, built the foundation for the future creation of a do-it-yourself public relations Web site.

Chapter Four

Research Data

The author conducted a mail survey to assess the public relations knowledge and determine the attitudes that New Jersey small business owners have toward public relations programs.

The mailed survey sought to determine answers to the following questions from New Jersey small business owners:

- How many people does your company employ?
- How many years has your company been in business?
- Does your company have a Web site?
 - Who designs your company's Web site?
- Are you satisfied with the growth of your company over the last year?
 - What factors have contributed most to your success?
 - What factors have most hindered your growth?
- How would you define public relations?
- What methods does your company use for informing potential customers about your products and services?
- Does your company have a public relations program or do you engage in the practice of public relations at all?
- Who is responsible for the public relations efforts within your company?
 - Does this person have any formal public relations training?

- What duties or responsibilities does the person engaging in public relations have?
- Why has your company chosen not to engage in the practice of public relations?
- Would you consider hiring a public relations consultant or firm in the future?
- Would you consider handling your own public relations in the future?
- Have you ever purchased any public relations training material in the past?
- Would you be interested in purchasing public relations training material if it would allow you to conduct your own public relations program?
 - If you were to purchase such material, who would use it?
- How would you prefer the training material to be presented?

Of the 75 surveys that were mailed to New Jersey small business owners for this study, 36 were completed and returned. Four of these surveys were discarded after the first question because the respondents' companies employed more than 51 people, which failed to classify them as a small business for this study. The remaining 32 completed surveys were used for this study.

In this chapter, the author presents the survey questionnaire results. The author also presents a question-by-question breakdown of how the 36 respondents answered each question in the survey. The author also included charts and graphs to illustrate responses from the New Jersey small business owners.

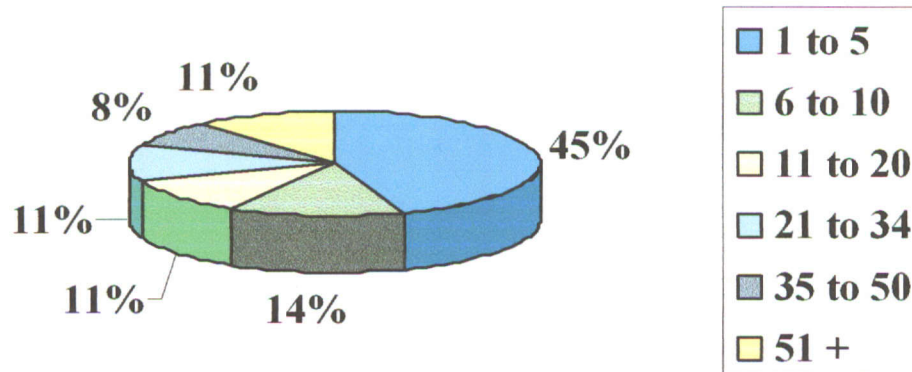
Survey responses

Q1 – How many people does your company employ?

Total number of respondents: 36

Number of employees	N	%
1-5	16	45
6-10	5	14
11-20	4	11
21-34	4	11
35-50	3	8
51+	4	11

**Q1 - How many people does
your company employ?**



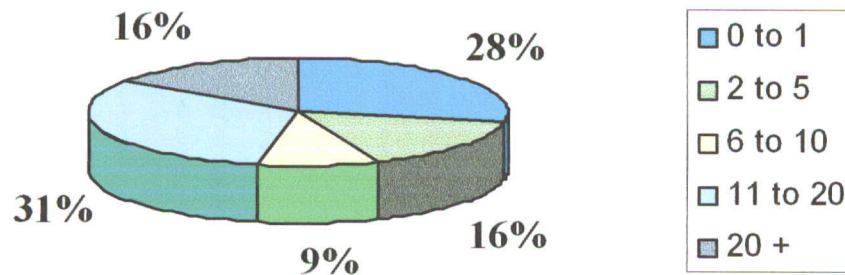
Forty-five percent of the respondents employ five or fewer people. This first query served as a banner question; therefore the 11 percent of respondents who employ 51 or more people were discarded from the remaining survey results.

Q2 – How many years has your company been in business?

Total number of respondents: 31

Number of years	N	%
0-1	9	28
2-5	5	16
6-10	3	9
11-20	10	31
20+	5	16

Q2 - How many years has your company been in business?



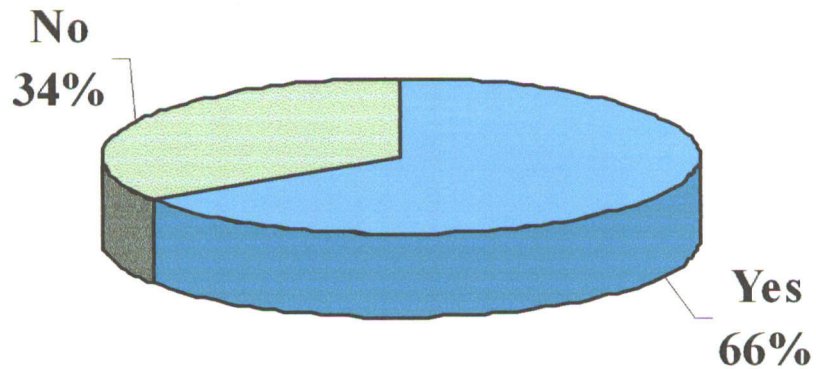
Twenty-eight percent of the New Jersey small businesses who responded to this survey have been in business for one year or less. Cumulatively, 44 percent of the companies surveyed have been in business for five years or less.

Q3 – Does your company have a Web site?

Total number of respondents: 32

	N	%
Yes	21	66
No	11	34

Q3 - Does your company have a Web site?



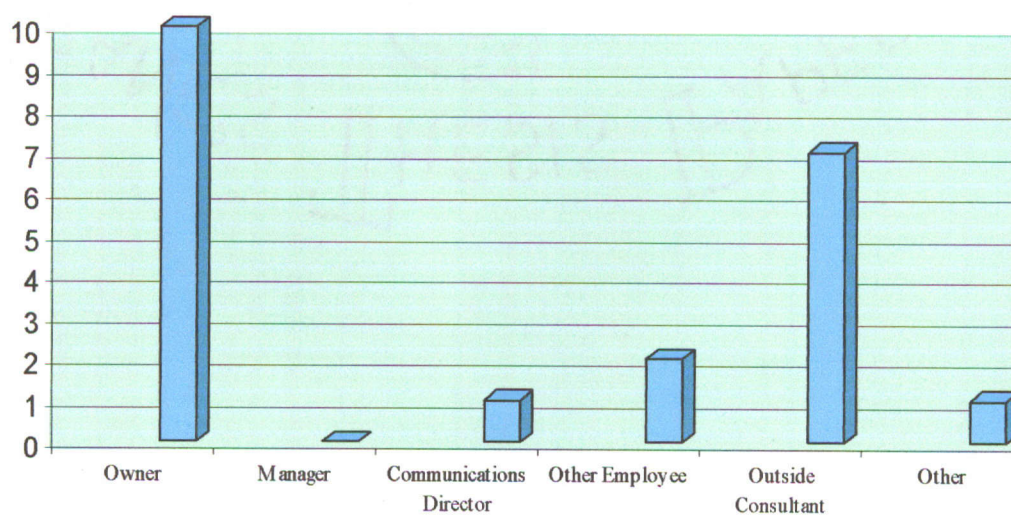
Nearly two-thirds of all the New Jersey small business owners who responded to this survey indicated that their company has a Web site.

Q4 – If you answered “yes” to question 3, who designs your company’s Web site?

Total number of respondents: 21

Web site designer	N	%
Owner	10	47.6
Manager	0	0
Communications Director	1	4.75
Other Employee	2	9.6
Consultant	7	33.3
Other	1	4.75

Q4 - Who designs your company's Web site?



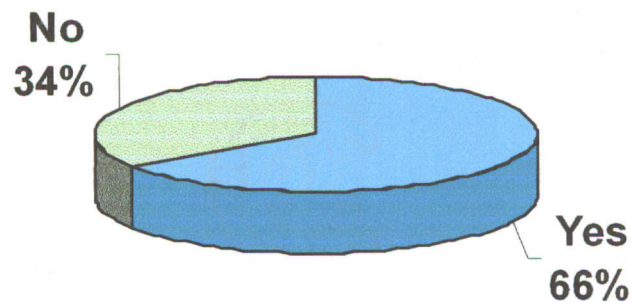
Almost half (47.6 percent) of the New Jersey small business owners who responded to this survey handle their organization’s Web site design, development and updates.

Q5 – As a small business owner, are you satisfied with the growth of your company over the last year?

Total number of respondents: 32

	N	%
Yes	21	66
No	11	34

Q5 - Are you satisfied with the growth of your company over the last year?



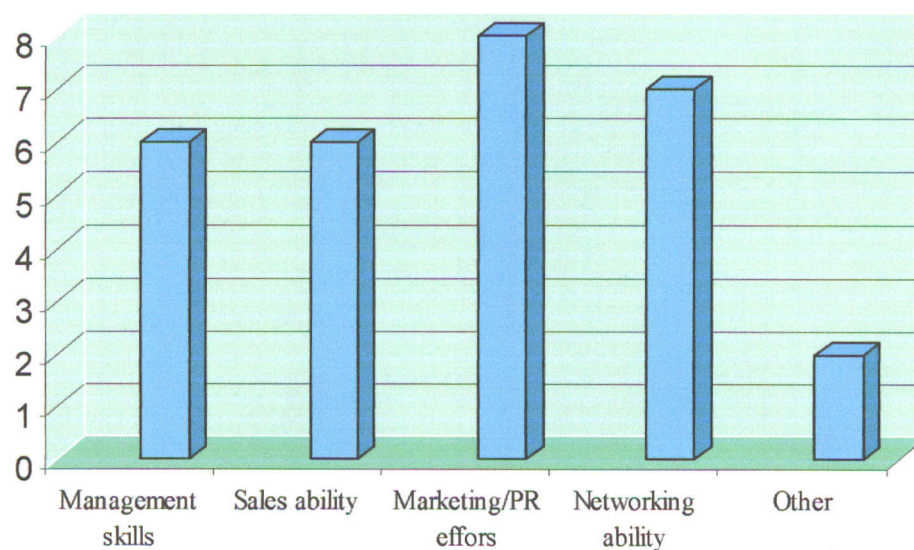
Nearly two-thirds of the New Jersey small business owners who responded to this survey are satisfied with the growth of their company over the past year.

Q6 –What factors have contributed most to your success?

Total number of respondents: 29

	N	%
Management Skills	6	20.6
Sales Ability	6	20.6
Marketing/PR Efforts	8	27.6
Networking	7	24.1
Other	2	6.9

Q6 - What factors have contributed most to your success?



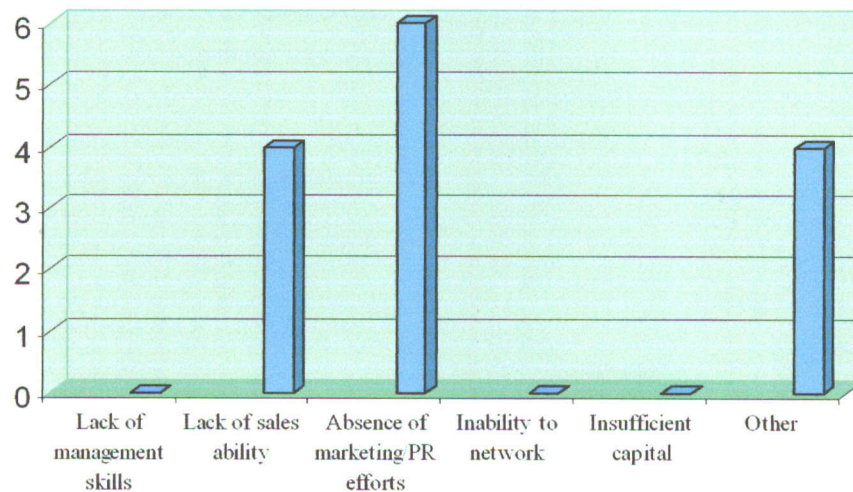
The New Jersey small business owners who are happy with their businesses' growth over the past year indicated that management skills and sales ability played an equal part (20.6 percent) and that their marketing and public relations efforts (27.6 percent) were the key reason for success.

Q7 –What factors have most hindered your growth?

Total number of respondents: 14

	N	%
Lack of Management Skills	0	0
Lack of Sales Ability	4	28.6
Absence of Marketing/PR Efforts	6	42.8
Inability to Network	0	0
Insufficient Capital	0	0
Other	4	28.6

Q7 - What factors have most hindered your growth?



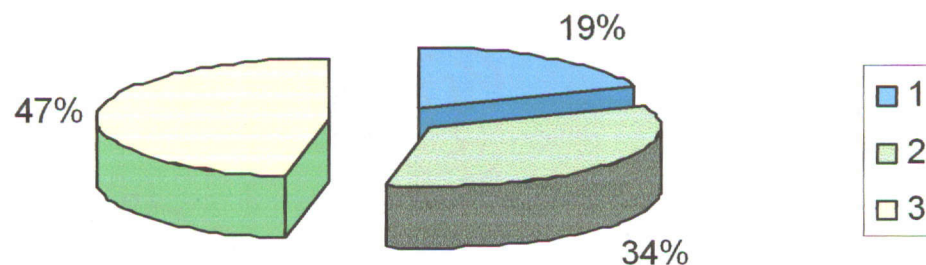
Of the New Jersey small business owners who indicated that they were not satisfied with their company's growth, nearly 43 percent of them attributed the lack of growth to the absence of marketing and public relations efforts.

Q8 –How would you define public relations?

Total number of respondents: 31

		N	%
1	Getting media attention for an organization	6	19
2	The dissemination of information about a company's products and services, designed to inform publics about the organization	11	34
3	The planned and systematic two-way process of communication between a company and its internal and external publics	15	47

Q8 - How would you define public relations?



A strong majority of the New Jersey small business owners who responded to this survey (81 percent) understand that information is an essential part of public relations. Forty-seven percent of the respondents recognize that public relations is the result of two-way communication.

Q9 –Currently, what methods does your company use for informing potential customers about your products and services? (check all that apply)

Total number of respondents: 32

	N	%
National newspaper advertisements	5	16
Local newspaper advertisements	7	22
Yellow page advertisements	18	56
Radio advertisements	19	59
Word-of-mouth endorsements	30	94
Sponsorship	8	25
Direct mail	5	16
Newsletters	3	9
Television advertisements	7	22
Brochures/fliers	11	34
Internet	14	44
Other	7	22

Nearly all of the respondents (94 percent) rely on word-of-mouth endorsements to inform potential clients and customers about their products and services. A majority of the respondents indicated that they use radio announcements (59 percent) and yellow page advertising (56 percent). Forty-four percent of the respondents use the Internet to inform potential clients and customers about their services and products.

Q10 –Circle the answer you feel best represents your response to the following statement:

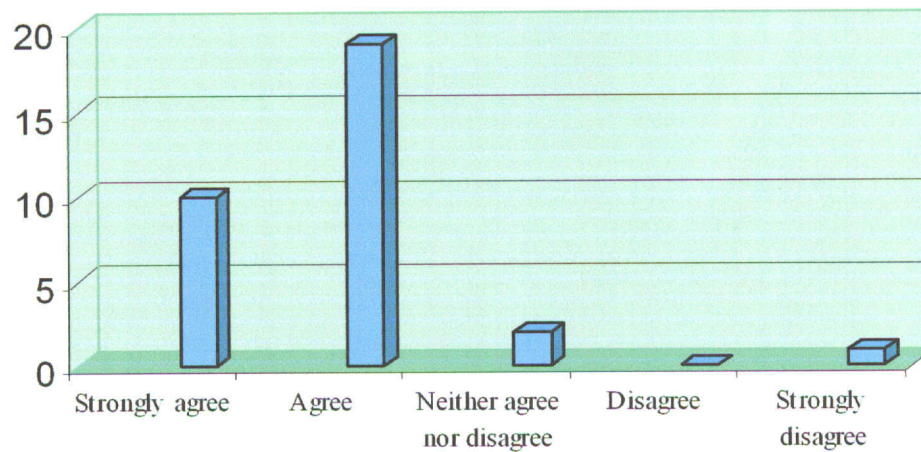
Public relations contributes directly to the growth of a small business

Total number of respondents: 32

	N	%
Strongly agree	10	31.2
Agree	19	59.4
Neither agree nor disagree	2	6.3
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	1	3.1

Q10 - Responses to the statement:

"Public relations contributes directly to the growth of a small business"



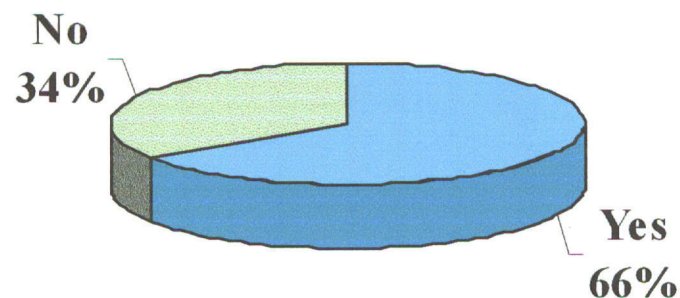
Almost all of the New Jersey small business owners who responded to this survey (96.9 percent) agree or strongly agree that “public relations contributes directly to the growth of a small business.”

Q11 –Does your company have a public relations program or do you engage in the practice of public relations at all?

Total number of respondents: 32

	N	%
Yes	21	66
No	11	34

Q11 - Does your company have a public relations program or do you engage in the practice of public relations at all?



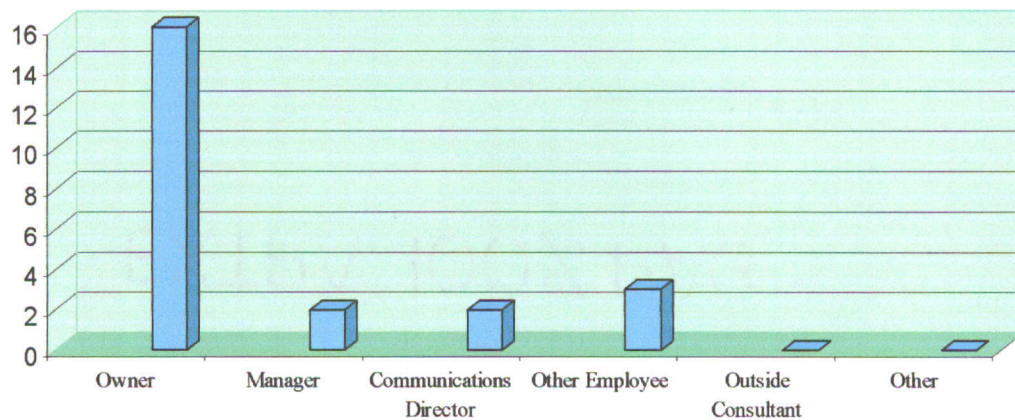
Almost two-thirds (66 percent) of the New Jersey small business owners who responded to this survey have a public relations program or practice some form of public relations.

Q12 –Who is responsible for the public relations efforts within your company?

Total number of respondents: 23

	N	%
Owner	16	69.6
Manager	2	8.7
Communications Director	2	8.7
Other Employee	3	13
Outside Consultant	0	0
Other	0	0

Q12 - Who is responsible for the public relations efforts within your company?



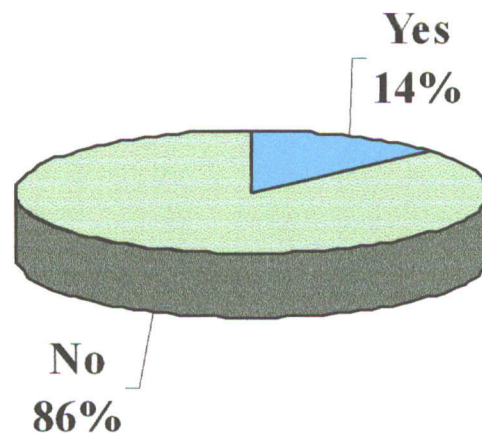
An overwhelming majority (69.6 percent) of New Jersey small business owners handle the public relations efforts within their own company or organization.

Q13 –Does this person have any formal public relations training?

Total number of respondents: 22

	N	%
Yes	3	14
No	19	86

**Q13 - Does this person have any formal
public relations training?**



Of the New Jersey small business owners who indicated that they have a public relations program, just 14 percent of the people leading the public relations efforts have training in the field. Conversely, 86 percent of the respondents indicated that the person heading their public relations efforts has no formal training in the field of public relations.

Q14 –What duties or responsibilities does the person engaging in public relations have?

Total number of respondents: 10

This was the one open ended, qualitative question on the survey questionnaire. The author chose to list the answers as they were indicated by the respondents:

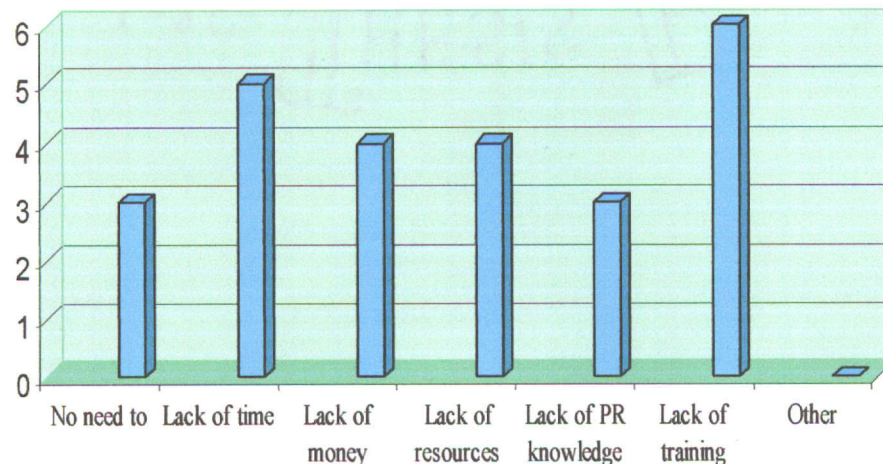
- Marketing responsibilities;
- Deciding on advertising;
- Purchase advertising;
- Engage in prospective customer dialogue;
- Create flier;
- Design brochure;
- Create signage;
- Positioning;
- Judging community attitudes;
- Two-way communication;
- Arrange in-house promotions.

Q15 –Why has your company chosen not to engage in the practice of public relations?

Total number of respondents: 25

	N	%
No need to	3	12
Lack of time	5	20
Lack of money	4	16
Lack of resources	4	16
Lack or PR knowledge	3	12
Lack of training	6	24
Other	0	0

Q15 - Why has your company chosen not to engage in the practice of public relations?



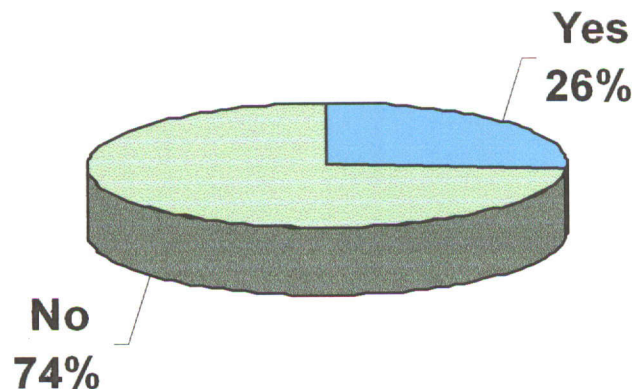
The respondents indicated that there were a variety of reasons they did not engage in the practice of public relations. Twenty-four percent of the respondents attributed this to a lack of training, while 20 percent attributed it to a lack of time. Lack of money (16 percent), lack of resources (16 percent), lack of public relations knowledge (12 percent) and no need to (12 percent) were the other factors the respondents selected.

Q16 –Would you consider hiring a public relations firm in the future?

Total number of respondents: 19

	N	%
Yes	5	26
No	14	74

Q16 - Would you consider hiring a public relations consultant or firm in the future?



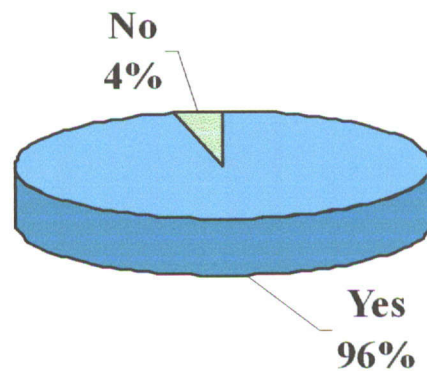
Most of the New Jersey small business owners who participated in this survey (74 percent) would not consider outsourcing their public relations duties. Only 26 percent of the respondents indicated that they would hire a public relations consultant or a public relations firm.

Q17 –Would you consider handling your own public relations in the future?

Total number of respondents: 26

	N	%
Yes	25	96
No	1	4

**Q17 - Would you consider handling your own
public relations in the future?**



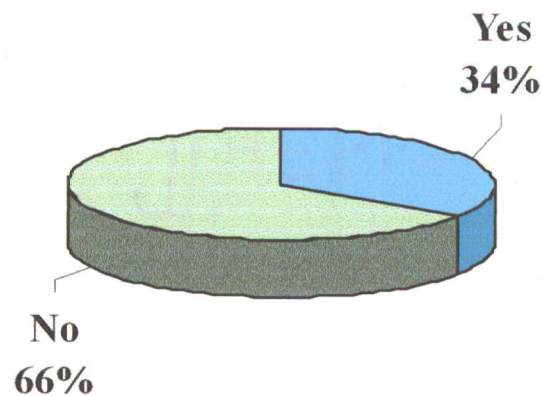
Nearly all of the respondents (96 percent) said that they would consider handling their own public relations in the future. Just four percent indicated that they would not be interested in handling their own public relations efforts.

Q18 –Have you ever purchased any public relations training material in the past?

Total number of respondents: 29

	N	%
Yes	11	34
No	21	66

Q18 - Have you ever purchased any public relations training material in the past?



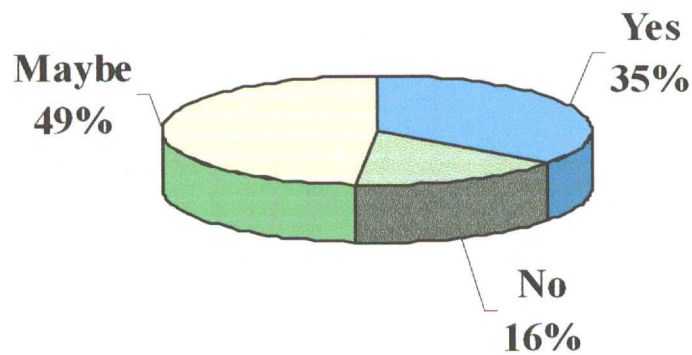
Thirty-four percent of the respondents claimed to have purchased some form of public relations training materials in the past. A majority (66 percent) said they have not purchased public relations training materials in the past.

Q19 –Would you be interested in purchasing public relations training material if it would allow you to conduct your own public relations program?

Total number of respondents: 31

	N	%
Yes	11	35
No	5	16
Maybe	15	49

Q19 - Would you be interested in purchasing public relations training material if it would allow you to conduct your own public relations program?



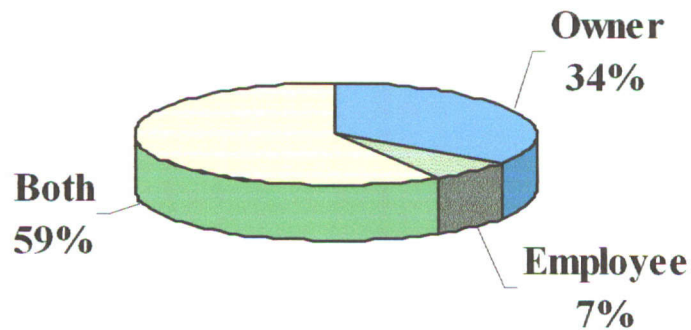
Cumulatively, an overwhelming number of respondents (84 percent) indicated that they would be interested in purchasing public relations training material if it would allow them to conduct their own public relations programs. Sixteen percent of the respondents said they would not be interested in purchasing such materials.

Q20 –If you were to purchase such material, who would use it?

Total number of respondents: 29

	N	%
Owner	10	34
Employee(s)	2	7
Both	17	59

Q20 - If you were to purchase such material, who would use it?



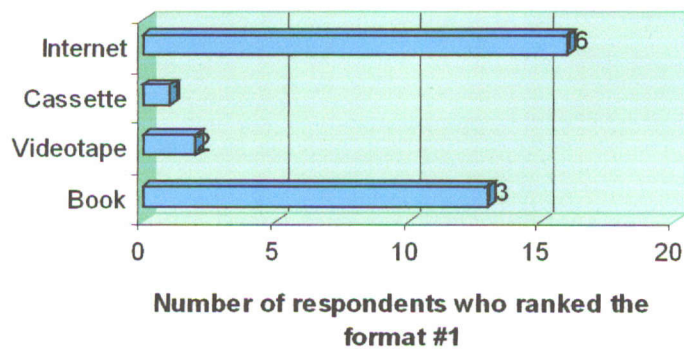
Cumulatively, 93 percent (34 percent of owners and 59 percent of owners who indicated that both they and an employee would use the material) of New Jersey small business owners would use the public relations training material if they purchased it. Seven percent indicated that they would purchase it, but allow another employee to handle the training and subsequent public relations efforts.

Q21 –Rank in order of preference from 1-4 (with 1 being the most desirable format and 4 being the least desirable) how you would prefer the training material to be presented?

- Book
- Videotape
- Cassette tape
- Internet (Web site)

Total number of respondents: 30

Q21 - Rank in order of preference from 1-4 how you would prefer the training material to be presented.



A majority, 53 percent, of the respondents indicated that they would prefer to receive public relations training via a Web site through the Internet. Based on the responses, the respondents rank the channels in the following order: 1) Internet, 2) Books, 3) Videotape and 4) Cassette tapes.

Relevant Findings

- Almost all of the respondents, 96.9 percent, agree or strongly agree that “public relations contributes directly to the growth of a small business.”
- Nearly all of the respondents, 96 percent, say that they would consider handling their own public relations in the future.
- Nearly all of the respondents, 94 percent, rely on word-of-mouth endorsements to inform potential clients and customers about their products and services.
- Nearly all of the small business owners, 93 percent, said that they would personally use the public relations training material if they purchased it.
- Cumulatively, 84 percent of the respondents indicated that they would be interested in or consider purchasing public relations training material that would allow them to conduct their own public relations programs.
- Seventy-four percent of the respondents would not consider hiring a public relations consultant or firm in the future.
- An overwhelming majority, 69.6 percent of New Jersey small business owners handle the public relations efforts within their own company or organization.
- Of the respondents, 66 percent of them are satisfied with the growth of their company over the past year.
- About two-thirds of the respondents, 66 percent, have a public relations program or practice some form of public relations.
- Of the 32 respondents, 66 percent of them have a company Web site.
- More than half of the respondents, 59 percent, use radio announcements.
- More than half of the respondents, 56 percent, use yellow page advertising.

- A majority, 53 percent, of the respondents indicated that their first choice for receiving public relations training materials would be through a Web site.
- Of the business owners who have a Web site, 47.6 percent of them design it themselves.
- Of the respondents, 47 percent recognize that public relations is the result of two-way communication.
- Of the 36 initial respondents, 45 percent of them employ five or fewer employees.
- Of the 32 qualifying respondents, 44 percent of them have been in business for five years or less.
- Of the respondents who are dissatisfied with their businesses' growth, 42.8 percent indicate a lack of marketing and public relations efforts as a factor.
- Of the respondents, 34 percent have purchased public relations training materials in the past.
- Of the respondents who are satisfied with their businesses' success, 27.6 percent attribute that success to their marketing and public relations efforts.
- Of the respondents who do not engage in public relations, 24 percent of them attribute this to a lack of training.
- Of the small business owners who indicated that they have a public relations program, just 14 percent of the people leading the public relations efforts have had training in the field.

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

This purpose of this project was two-fold. The first portion of the project studied small business owners and their attitudes toward public relations programs. The second purpose was to use this information to ascertain a need for a do-it-yourself public relations training Web site. To help determine the attitudes of New Jersey small business owners, the author created a 21-question survey questionnaire that was mailed to 75 New Jersey small businesses. Of the 21 questions, 20 were qualitative and one question served as an open-ended, qualitative question to allow the respondents to further illustrate their understanding of public relations.

Survey Questionnaire Mailed to New Jersey Small Business Owners

The author constructed the survey instrument after conducting secondary research. This secondary research consists of similar projects such as theses and dissertations. Secondary research also comes from books, journals, magazines, newspaper articles, trade publications, government publications, Web sites and other online resources - including databases. The questionnaire was reviewed by Rowan University Professor Dr. Don Bagin and was pre-tested and critiqued by a class of nine public relations graduate students.

Next, 75 New Jersey small businesses were selected from the New Jersey Directory of Small Businesses 2005 Directory. These surveys were mailed on March 30, 2005 and respondents were given a deadline of April 15, 2005. Of the 75 New Jersey small business owners that were selected, 36 replied. The results of the 36 completed surveys were compiled and hand-coded by the author. The data was then analyzed and charts were developed using Microsoft Excel. From this, conclusions were drawn and decisions were made.

Conclusions

Of the 36 initial respondents, 45 percent of them employ five or fewer employees. Of the 32 qualifying respondents, 44 percent of them have been in business for five years or less. Nearly half of the respondents, 47 percent, recognize that public relations is the result of two-way communication.

The information compiled from the 36 surveys upheld the author's three original hypotheses:

1. Small business owners believe that public relations can contribute to the growth of a small business;
2. Small business owners are more likely to institute a public relations program if they can do it themselves; and
3. The need exists among small businesses for a Web site pertaining to do-it-yourself public relations practices.

The data collected in this study strongly supports the first hypothesis as almost all of the respondents, 96.9 percent, agree or strongly agree that "public relations contributes

directly to the growth of a small business.” Although 66 percent of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the growth of their business in the past year, those who were dissatisfied with their businesses’ lack of success, 42.8 percent indicate a lack of marketing and public relations efforts as a factor.

The survey results also support the second hypothesis as nearly all of the respondents, 96 percent, say that they would consider handling their own public relations in the future. In addition, 84 percent of the respondents indicated that they would be interested in or consider purchasing public relations training material that would allow them to conduct their own public relations programs. Also, 93 percent of the respondents said they would personally use the public relations training material if they bought it.

The third hypothesis, which asserted that the need exists among small businesses for a Web site pertaining to do-it-yourself public relations practices, proved to be true as a majority, 53 percent, of the respondents indicated that their first choice for receiving public relations training materials would be through a Web site. This seemed to coincide directly with the fact that of the 32 respondents, 66 percent of them have a company Web site. Of the small business owners who have a Web site, 47.6 percent of them design it themselves, demonstrating the need among small business owners for a do-it-yourself public relations Web site.

About two-thirds of the respondents, 66 percent, have a public relations program or practice some form of public relations. Of those 66 percent, an overwhelming majority, 69.6 percent of New Jersey small business owners handle the public relations efforts within their own company or organization.

As far as communication methods that inform potential clients and customers about their products and services nearly all of the respondents, 94 percent, rely on word-of-mouth endorsements. More than half of the respondents, 59 percent, use radio announcements, while 56 percent, use yellow page advertising.

Recommendations

New Jersey small business owners can adequately identify the definition of public relations. Most New Jersey small business owners recognize the importance of public relations programs and engage in some form of public relations. That being said, many small businesses owners, many whose businesses have been negatively impacted by the downward shift in the economy, are reluctant to spend money on public relations programs.

New Jersey small businesses owners indicated that they would adopt a public relations program if they could afford it and do it by themselves. Since most small business owners lack any formal public relations training, a need exists for affordable public relations training.

With two-thirds of New Jersey small business owners utilizing the Internet already with their own Web sites, the Web serves as an appropriate channel for the public relations training material to be presented. A Web site should contain information regarding all facets of public relations. A step-by-step training Web site should show a small business owner how to do something as simple as write a news release or as complex as establish a community relations program.

To further develop a do-it-yourself public relations Web site for small business owners, the author feels the following areas should be further explored:

- *A larger scope of the study to measure the attitudes of more New Jersey small business owners or even small business owners nationally*

This study was compiled by mailing surveys to 75 New Jersey small business owners. By sending surveys to more New Jersey small business owners or by expanding the study nationally, the study could be expanded.

- *More questions should be asked to help determine the respondents' understanding of public relations*

This study was limited in the questions it asked respondents to answer in regards to their understanding of public relations. Future studies could expand on these types of questions and help further understand the respondents' knowledge of the subject.

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Appendix

14. What duties or responsibilities does the person engaging in public relations have?

15. Why has your company chosen not to engage in the practice of public relations?

- ☐ no need to
- ☐ lack of time
- ☐ lack of money
- ☐ lack of resources
- ☐ lack of public relations knowledge
- ☐ lack of training
- ☐ other _____

16. Would you consider hiring a public relations consultant or firm in the future?

☐ Yes ☐ No

17. Would you consider handling your own public relations in the future?

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Have you ever purchased any public relations training material in the past?

☐ Yes ☐ No

19. Would you be interested in purchasing public relations training material if it would allow you to conduct your own public relations program?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

20. If you were to purchase such material, who would use it?

a. owner b. employee(s) c. both

21. Rank in order of preference from 1-4 (with 1 being the most desirable format and 4 being the least desirable) how you would prefer the training material to be presented?

- ☐ Book
- ☐ Videotape
- ☐ Cassette tape
- ☐ Internet (Web site)

If you would like a summary of the survey results when they become available, please e-mail billpavlou@yahoo.com

Dear Small Business Owner:

I am a graduate student at Rowan University (Glassboro, NJ), conducting research for my master's degree thesis project. My project seeks to establish a necessary connection between public relations and successful small businesses.

In doing so, I am conducting a survey of small business owners to see what relationship currently exists between small businesses and public relations practices. This information will be the basis for a Web site designed as a do-it-yourself tool for small businesses to use public relations practices.

Recommendations for the Web site will be based almost entirely on responses from small business owners in New Jersey. As a small business owner, your input is a key part of my research.

The survey should take no longer than ten minutes to complete. Your responses are greatly appreciated. Your name is not necessary as all surveys and results are anonymous and will not be used for anything other than this study.

I hope to receive all responses by **Friday April 15**.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,


William Pavlou

1. How many people does your company employ?

a. 1-5 b. 6-10 c. 11-20 d. 21-34 e. 35-50 f. 51+

2. How many years has your company been in business?

a. 0-1 b. 2-5 c. 6-10 d. 11-20 e. more than 20 years

3. Does your company have a Web site?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. If you answered yes to question 3, who designs your company's Web site?

- a. Owner
- b. Manager
- c. Communications Director
- d. Other Employee
- e. Outside Consultant
- f. Other _____

5. As a small business owner, are you satisfied with the growth of your company over the last year?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. If your answer to question 5 is yes, what factors have contributed most to your success? (check all that apply)

- ☐ management skills
- ☐ sales ability
- ☐ marketing/public relations efforts
- ☐ networking ability
- ☐ other _____

7. If your answer to question 5 is no, what factors have most hindered your growth? (check all that apply)

- ☐ lack of management skills
- ☐ lack of sales ability
- ☐ absence of marketing/ public relations efforts
- ☐ inability to network
- ☐ insufficient capital
- ☐ other _____

8. How would you define public relations?

- ☐ Getting media attention for an organization
- ☐ The dissemination of information about a company's products and services, designed to inform publics about the organization.
- ☐ The planned and systematic two-way process of communication between a company and its internal and external publics.
- ☐ Other _____

9. Currently, what methods does your company use for informing potential customers about your products and services? (check all that apply)

- ☐ national newspaper advertisements
- ☐ local newspaper advertisements
- ☐ yellow page advertisements
- ☐ radio advertisement
- ☐ word-of-mouth endorsement
- ☐ sponsorship
- ☐ direct mail
- ☐ newsletters
- ☐ television advertisements
- ☐ distribution of brochures/fliers
- ☐ internet
- ☐ other _____

10. Circle the answer you feel best represents your response to the following statement:

Public relations contributes directly to the growth of a small business

- ☐ strongly agree
- ☐ agree
- ☐ neither agree or disagree
- ☐ disagree
- ☐ strongly disagree

11. Does your company have a public relations program or do you engage in the practice of public relations at all?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered yes to question 11, answer questions 12, 13 and 14.

If you answered no to question 11, answer questions 15, 16 and 17.

12. Who is responsible for the public relations efforts within your company?

- ☐ Owner
- ☐ Manager
- ☐ Communications Director
- ☐ Other Employee
- ☐ Outside Consultant
- ☐ Other _____

13. Does this person have any formal public relations training?

☐ Yes ☐ No